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ABSTRACT

Beginning with a rationale for implementing a primary grade keyboarding course, this paper describes the implementation of such a course at the Bernardsville (New Jersey) Elementary School. The methods and procedures discussed include the essential concepts to consider when teaching keyboarding and the materials necessary to implement the program. It is suggested that the program begin in kindergarten with a particular sequence of instruction, and the instructional activities are described: (1) the introduction of a personal computer and its components, with emphasis on the keyboard; (2) the use of laminated copies of the keyboard that are color coded to represent the fingers used on the home row keys; and (3) the use of four colors of fingernail polish to match the fingers to the appropriate home key positions. It is pointed out that once the color-key correspondence is mastered, the letter-key correspondence can be introduced using the same method, and then practice on real keyboards can begin. Other teaching methods for keyboarding practice that are described include the use of posters and floor keyboards to reinforce home row key placement, and blindfolds for motivating students. Ways of evaluating student progress are also suggested and an example of a practice exercise is included. (DJR)

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BERNARDSVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Primary Keyboarding Curriculum

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PRIMARY KEYBOARDING CURRICULUM

RATIONALE

The increase of computers in the homes as well as in the schools has necessitated implementing a keyboarding program in the primary grades.

In order for students to effectively progress in the computer's content area courses, it was necessary that keyboarding skills be taught to accompany and facilitate the work completed on the computers in the primary grades.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This program was developed by the Gifted and Talented instructor and Supplemental teachers.

Before beginning this program, certain concepts are essential to the teaching of keyboarding at this level:

1. Knowledge of terms left/right
2. Finger recognition (index, middle, ring, pinkie, thumb).
3. Color recognition
4. Letter recognition

Certain materials are necessary to implement this keyboarding program:

1. Color coded paper keyboards
2. Pink, green, blue and yellow nail polish
3. Large scale color coded keyboard
4. Floor sized keyboard model
5. Computer keyboard, monitor, disk drive, printer and tape recorder.

IN CLASS INSTRUCTION

Students are introduced to a personal computer and shown its components and functions at which time the keyboard is emphasized.

The keyboarding program begins in kindergarten with the use of a laminated copy of the keyboard. Markers are used to color code the keyboard. Four colors are used to represent the right to left fingers used on the home row keys.

Each fingernail is then polished matching the appropriate home key position on the keyboard:

1. Index fingers are painted pink and placed on pink colored home row keys.
2. Middle fingers are painted green and placed on green colored home row keys.
3. Ring fingers are painted blue and placed on blue colored home row keys.
4. Pinkie fingers are painted yellow and place on yellow colored home row keys.

One key color is introduced at a time in order from pink to yellow. Once introduced, the students say finger color while striking corresponding keys according to teacher's sequence demonstrated on the large model keyboard. This process should take approximately four lessons.

Once the color-key correspondence is mastered, the letter-key correspondence is introduced in the same finger order as before:

1. Index fingers are placed on the F (left hand) and the J (right hand) keys.
2. Middle fingers are placed in the D (left hand) and the K (right hand) keys.
3. Ring fingers are placed on the S (left hand) and L (right hand) keys.
4. Pinkie fingers are placed on the A (left hand) and the ; (right hand) keys.

The letters are introduced in pairs, in order of finger, from index to pinkies. As with color instruction, the students say the letters while striking corresponding keys, according to teachers sequence demonstrated on the large model keyboard. This process should also take approximately four lessons.

The children check for correct finger placement by looking for the G and H keys showing in the middle of the home row. The G and H keys are introduced once the home row keys are mastered:

1. The left index finger jumps to the G key and back to rest on the F key.
2. The right index finger jumps to the H key and back to rest on the J key.

After instruction with paper keyboards, the students should proceed to practice typing the home row keys on a real computer keyboard. The students should practice keys in pairs of letters from the index finger to the pinkie, just as they did when using the paper keyboard. The students should then be able to type words composed of home row letters. Once again this instruction should be guided by teacher demonstration on a large scale computer keyboard.

At this time the student should learn that the right thumb is used to press the space bar. Students may then be asked to type phrases also composed of home row letters. A grammatically correct sentence is not possible to type at this time due to the fact that the shift and the period keys have not yet been taught. An example might be: dad had a salad.

Another method of instruction for keyboarding practice is to use a large poster to display letters, words or sentences for the students to type on their keyboard. Similarly, the teacher may hand out individual sheets containing items for the students to type.

A giant floor keyboard is an excellent idea to use for the reinforcment of home row key placement. Drawn on a sheet or large piece of paper, it can be used to play games with the entire class.

The use of blindfolds during keyboarding is a successful method of motivation for the students. This can also be used by the teacher to determine a child's individual progress.

When the home row keys have been mastered, the top and bottom rows should be introduced in the same systematic process as the home row instruction. Although the pace can be increased, the same proper placement should be emphasized on the keys. Other functional keys should then be taught ie: return, shift, period etc. This will steer the student in the direction of correct word processing. At this time, the students are ready to try any of the various commercial programs available for the continuance of proper keyboarding skills.

EVALUATION

Worksheets and coloring dittos are a useful way to evaluate and review the important components of a computer. It is important for the students to understand the concept of a computer and the value of learning correct keyboarding skills. To further reinforce this, an insentive program such as stickers for a correctly typed row or certificates of achievement, has proven very successful in encouraging productivity.

Students should be closely monitored during the introduction to basic keyboarding, in order to avoid developing bad habits which would be difficult to correct at an older age. The teacher should closely observe the students as they type, offering constant and appropriate feedback. Accuracy should be stressed during keyboarding, and speed should come with continued practice. Blank keyboard charts are an effective method of evaluation to determine a child's knowledge of the keyboard letters.

SUMMARY

There are many benefits that result from a keyboarding program. Not only do students do well typing during academic computer courses but they develop in many other areas and ways. On a lower level, identification of color is reinforced as well as matching concepts, letter recognition and classification. Benefits which accrue later are typing skills, word processing skills, better sucess wiht commercial programs, and the possibility of a related career.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Home row keys are:

A S D F G H J K L ;

Home row words are:

a	dad
had	salad
as	adds
has	gal
sash	alas
alas	ash
lad	gash
sal	slash
flash	glass
fall	fad

Home row sentences are:

dad has a gal;

dad had a salad

a gal has a sash

a lad has a gash

sal adds a fad

dad has a lad